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Wednesday, 13 September 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Makayat-Safouesse
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Peru	Mr. Pereyra Plasencia
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/707)

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06-51929 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/707)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Finland, Serbia and Ukraine in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Joachim Rücker, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Rücker to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/707, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I shall now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker.

Mr. Rücker: I am honoured to have this opportunity to address the Security Council and grateful to you, Sir, and to the members of the Council for the invitation. I took up my new responsibilities only a few days ago, but have been Deputy Special Representative for the last year and a half, so I am not new to Kosovo.

I welcome the presence here of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr Agim Çeku. Attendance by the head of the Kosovo Government has become a regular feature at these meetings, which is right and fair since we are discussing the future of the people of that territory.

The status process dominates the political agenda in Kosovo at the moment and will continue to do so until Kosovo's final status is determined. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) considers it a priority to support the Special Envoy and his Office in the pursuit of their delicate and difficult task, while acknowledging that UNMIK itself does not have a role in the determination of Kosovo's final status. The general feeling in Kosovo now is that a new phase of Kosovo's history is about to begin. That makes the majority of the people hopeful — but also nervous, since the outcome is still uncertain. Although progress continues to be made, and although UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) continue to work together to improve governance in Kosovo, in the background of all activity now is that uncertainty about the future. One idea I would like to leave the Council with today is that Kosovo needs to be rid of that uncertainty, and to move on.

It is encouraging for the future of Kosovo that the status negotiations on the Pristina side have been conducted by a unity team led by President Sejdiu. Opposition leaders in that process have achieved a difficult balance between solidarity within the unity

team and a critical domestic stance towards the performance of the Government, as is normal in democracies. Along with the status process, there is still the need to provide good government and public services to the people of Kosovo. Under the energetic leadership of Prime Minister Çeku the pace has remained at the rate reported in our last presentation, in June.

The standards programme has received even greater attention since the Contact Group presented the Government, on 9 June, with a list of 13 priorities, drawn largely from the results of the 30 April UNMIK technical assessment on standards implementation. The list presented to the Government by the Contact Group identified key areas, mainly with regard to the protection of minorities and community rights — for example, new laws on cultural heritage, languages and so forth. The PISG, with help from UNMIK, have devoted much attention to meeting the targets set by the Contact Group. The priorities have by now been mostly achieved. With regard to the remaining priorities, they are on track and progress is being made. I thank the Contact Group for that contribution to the standards process, which has undoubtedly helped to maintain the momentum on implementation.

At the same time, the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan, drafted in 2004, was in need of revision to reflect changing realities. Last month, therefore, the Government adopted an Action Plan to implement its European partnership. That Action Plan now forms the basis of both European integration and standards work, and so unites two processes that have the common objective of achieving social and economic progress.

One area of particular concern to us is the situation in northern Kosovo. In May, several highly publicized security incidents occurred that — without any evidence — were portrayed by some Kosovo Serb leaders and Serbian authorities as inter-ethnic attacks. Those incidents were used by the municipalities north of the river Ibar to sever all cooperation with the Pristina authorities. That boycott continues, although the northern municipalities continue to cooperate with UNMIK. Meanwhile, UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) have substantially expanded and enhanced their security presence north of the river Ibar.

Still, incidents of violent crime occur, such as the grenade explosion in a Serb bar in northern Mitrovica and the subsequent violent response against non-Serb passers-by. For several days we had to close the main bridge linking the two sides of the town, but we have now started to reopen the crossing as the situation has become more stable. Violent crimes are to be deplored wherever they occur, and prosecuted with the full force of the law. But frequent attempts to portray Kosovo as a place where non-Albanians, in particular the Kosovo Serbs, are under constant attack and are daily victims of ethnic crimes are completely unjustified. They do not reflect the reality on the ground.

Serbs and Albanians will have to live together in Kosovo whatever the outcome of the status discussions. We all know that will not be easy. But, in fact, we see many encouraging examples in Kosovo where people are already finding practical solutions to their common problems and are laying the foundations for a multi-ethnic Kosovo. But, obviously, those are not the cases that attract attention and publicity.

In that context, I strongly support the initiative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, who intends to launch, in October, a systematic, structured approach to promote reconciliation.

Belgrade retains a powerful influence over the attitudes of the Kosovo Serbs. I would wish to get a clear signal from the Belgrade authorities to the Kosovo Serbs that their future is in Kosovo if they wish it, that they have no reason to leave and that they should find ways to cooperate with the elected Kosovo authorities. A valuable part of that signal would be the withdrawal of the directive that Serbs in the public service must either leave the PISG payroll or else lose the extra salaries and other benefits paid by Belgrade. I am ready to work with Belgrade to build a Kosovo where neighbours with such a troubled past can finally find a common future.

The PISG has continued its outreach campaign, and Government ministers continue to seek out non-Albanian audiences and to reassure them. But that campaign has not always been successful in gaining trust. For example, Serbs in the enclave of Velika Hoča recently refused to meet the Prime Minister. Certainly, the Kosovo Government has a responsibility to gain the trust of all of its citizens. But if there is no wish even for dialogue from its interlocutors, then its power to succeed is somewhat limited.

Yes, the Kosovo Serbs are in a difficult situation. They fear for their future and they do not know whom they can trust. They have been barred for over two and a half years from participating actively in the work of the Kosovo Assembly or the Government. But isolation is not the answer to their problems; integration is.

The security situation has remained stable, although I would not deny that there continue to be risks — for example, incidents such as the ones I mentioned, which might themselves be relatively insignificant but which might escalate. In such an environment, security policy is always a priority. I am glad to acknowledge the continuing good cooperation between the leadership of UNMIK and KFOR.

I spoke earlier about the implementation of standards and the PISG's growing commitment to serving the public. Two areas that need particular attention are justice and the economy. We noted in June the need to build a justice system that can command the faith of the population and business, whatever community they come from. Efforts to reappoint all judges and prosecutors on the basis of a reassessment of their credentials should contribute to an improvement and should begin soon. But building an efficient and impartial justice system for Kosovo is a task that will take some time.

As for the economy, the legal and institutional framework for a functioning market economy is largely in place. However, increased private sector development is necessary to extricate Kosovo's economy out of a vicious circle of low growth, unemployment and a large trade imbalance. There are encouraging signs in that respect. Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Kosovo has been projected at some 3 per cent. Given the shrinking public sector and diminishing donor input, such a performance is due to an expansion of the private sector. Moreover, privatization has continued at an accelerated pace. Overall, Kosovo's economic growth will depend on investment-led development of key economic sectors, and clarification of Kosovo's status would remove certain complications that currently affect long-term investment decisions.

We in UNMIK are well aware that we retain our mandate under resolution 1244 (1999) for as long as the Council decides. At the same time, against the background of the status process, we have to start planning for the end of the mandate. We have continued to follow the thinking of the Contact Group on the likely shape and powers of the international presence which will follow us, and we have maintained a dialogue with international partners on the transition from UNMIK to that future presence. There is now in Pristina a European Union planning team looking at future involvement in the police and justice sectors, and a separate team advising Brussels on the composition of the future international civilian office. We have regular contacts and discussions with both those teams, and we also have a Steering Group which brings together international actors with an interest or role in the transition process. We plan to include other interested parties in the discussions at various levels, including the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, which also need to prepare for the time of transition which lies ahead.

The devolution of UNMIK's powers and activities will in itself be a major exercise, and we are planning for that too. We need to do this even though we have no timetable for the end of UNMIK's mandate under resolution 1244 (1999), in order to be ready to move forward quickly and efficiently when the time comes.

As I said earlier, UNMIK will discharge its responsibilities as long as it has them. But I would like to reiterate that, for the sake of the people of Kosovo and their future, the current period of uncertainty needs to be brought to an end as soon as possible. Yes, there will be tensions and difficulties in the months ahead, and we can expect emotions occasionally to spill over when something so vital to people's interests is being determined. But I believe that the tensions and difficulties arising from any delay in this process would be even greater. Delay will not bring reconciliation. Delay will not lead to economic recovery. Delay will only prolong the tensions existing in Kosovo society, which will feed frustration and make the new start, when it does come, even harder to get right.

I look forward to serving as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo at a historic time. I expect to be the last person to perform that function. In any case, I am well aware that the task is not easy. But we must get it right, and I am absolutely convinced that together we can get it right if the current momentum in the status process is kept up.

06-51929

Momentum is key. Let me conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for your continued support in this very crucial phase of our mission.

The President: I thank Mr. Rücker for his briefing.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): It gives me great pleasure to be able to address the Council and to pay my respects to this body of the world Organization.

First and foremost, I wish to emphasize the unique significance of the Security Council as a guarantor upholding the universal principles of international law and the entire world order. This is even more important if we keep in mind the imperative of bringing about peace and stability in, and developing the future of, both Kosovo and Metohija and the region of South-Eastern Europe.

The Republic of Serbia resolutely maintains that upholding and promoting peace and stability in the Western Balkans will be possible only through strict observance of international principles. These include, first and foremost, the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of democratic States.

We wish in particular to reiterate the fact that Serbia is fully determined to assume its share of responsibility in the process of working towards a successful resolution of the Kosovo and Metohija issue, in accordance with international law and in conformity with universal democratic values. We are addressing the Security Council with full confidence that it will make an instrumental contribution in line with its previously adopted documents, in particular with resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, which reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

We firmly believe that achieving a durable solution to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija will be possible only through systematic, responsible and orderly negotiations, without imposed deadlines that can only result in additional pressure. Otherwise, new complications may arise with unforeseeable consequences — the inevitable result of any departure from the universal principles embraced by the international community. Impatience and haste cannot contribute to a sustainable solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija or to peace and stability in the region.

May I remind the Council that three months ago, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported on the progress made in all areas, including security. On that very day, a Serbian returnee from Klina, Dragan Popovic, was brutally murdered. The perpetrators were never identified. This was taken as yet another ominous message to the Serb community, especially to the returnees. Regrettably, that reality speaks for itself.

Since that meeting of the Security Council, 51 small- and large-scale incidents have occurred, involving assaults against the lives and property of Serbs. However, from October 2005, when it was decided that the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo would begin, to 1 September 2006, there were 260 incidents.

In the evening of 26 August this year, a 16-year-old Albanian slowly walked across the bridge between South and North Mitrovica. He threw a bomb at a nearby Serbian coffee shop packed with people and calmly walked away. There is no doubt that this act of violence was political and that it targeted Serbs. Therefore, it was not aimed at a specific person who happened to be a Serb, but at Serbs as legitimate targets.

It is with the deepest regret that we must state that that terrorist attack against the Serbs occurred subsequent to a statement to the effect that the Serbs as a nation were guilty — a statement that was expressly made in front of the Serbian negotiating team in Vienna and several other witnesses by a person one would never expect to do so, especially considering the high office he holds.

That unfortunate statement was followed by a refusal to offer an apology to the Serbian people for having made such a harsh accusation. At the same time, this has been the only argument, if it is an argument at all, that has been presented in favour of Kosovo and Metohija's independence so far.

The Serbian negotiating team is working actively on protection of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, mainly through decentralization. Regarding the issue of future status, its main arguments are based on the universality of

international law and the inviolability of borders. That presumes that it is inadmissible to rob the internationally recognized State of Serbia of 15 per cent of its territory in order to create a second Albanian State in the region. It is thus clear why the Albanian side has not engaged in meaningful negotiations. The negotiations have so far been conducted in such a casual manner that minutes were not kept nor were rules of procedure set until the Serbian side explicitly requested that these things be done.

On 28 March this year, there was yet another incident on the same bridge in the course of which a 19-year-old man, Milisav Ilincic, was stabbed. The international public prosecutor for the Kosovska Mitrovica district, Paul Flynn, terminated the investigation against two Albanians suspected of attempted murder, although one of them had confessed to having stabbed Ilincic.

Taking into account that event and many other incidents, as well as the incomprehensible fact that ever since UNMIK assumed responsibility for peace and security in Kosovo and Metohija in 1999, very few cases involving the murder or assault of Serbs have been tried in court, it would appear that the survival of the remaining Serbs, from the Albanians' point of view, stands in the way of their political and ideological goals. Hence, the UNMIK tactic of avoiding conflicts with militant Albanians simply means turning a blind eye to reality.

As hard to believe as it is, everything I have mentioned leads to the conclusion that fear of powerful and violent Albanians and their threats of revenge is the very factor that is undermining international law and justice.

Let me remind members that in Kosovo and Metohija people may get killed just for speaking a Slavic language resembling Serbian, as in the case of a Bulgarian in Pristina who lost his life. Ethnic identity becomes a license to kill. But the real situation is even worse. In a terrorist bomb attack I referred to earlier, on 26 August, a few non-Serbs — foreign nationals — were also injured. One of them happened to be an international police officer. They were attacked just for being present in a Serb-owned establishment.

As for religious monuments, cultural heritage and religious freedoms, on the one hand there is an emphasis on legislating those matters, and we welcome that. On the other hand, in practice, religious shrines are being desecrated and looted. As one of many examples, in a church in the Serbian village of Mogila, in the vicinity of Gnjilane, there are still some Christian icons on the church walls with the eyes of the saints gouged out by Albanian extremists in the campaign of ethnic cleansing of March 2004 against the remaining Serbs and other non-Albanians. The Provisional Institutions have never undertaken to protect those religious shrines or to ease the fears of the believers who pray in that church and look at the desecrated icons as they contemplate whether they should remain in their homeland.

Furthermore, the international community has every right to demand that the Kosovo Institutions adopt laws against so-called general discrimination. However, the mere adoption of such laws is not a solution to the problem. The true leaders of Kosovo society are the individuals of undisputed authority within their communities: the clan leaders. The decisions are made by them, not by the judiciary. That was said even by Mr. Kai Eide in his report (S/2005/635, annex). In Kosovo, justice is being taken into people's own hands; tribal laws and blood feuds still rule there, unfortunately. One cannot fight that just by promulgating laws against discrimination. What is needed are true implementation and true monitoring.

Securing the safety of public transport has always been a priority — at least a declared one — and is one of the 13 recommendations of the Contact Group. In practice, there are so-called death roads, a colloquial expression used by KFOR and UNMIK officers to refer to the roads connecting the Serbian settlement Strpce — a very distant Serbian enclave in Kosovo territory — to other Serbian regions. So far, 12 terrorist attacks against Serbs have been conducted there.

Only a few hours before the public transport competencies were to be transferred from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, several Albanians stoned a bus carrying Serbian children home from a field trip. The incident took place in the village of Zabari, outside Kosovska Mitrovica, on 30 August 2006. Bus windows were broken, but fortunately there were no casualties. UNMIK issued a statement denying that the police officers escorting the bus had witnessed the incident — not denying, however, that it had taken place. Sadly enough, the children will remember their ordeal, whether anyone saw it or not, whether anyone chose to

see anything or not, or whether a statement on the incident was issued at all.

I wish to recall that Ambassador Kai Eide, in his comprehensive review of the situation in Kosovo, qualified the process of establishing the future status of Kosovo and the continuance of standards implementation as the only way towards any progress. Ambassador Eide also emphasized other very important and essential issues. Regrettably, so far there have been no serious signs whatsoever that anyone is willing to recognize at least some among those absolutely adequate and correct recommendations. On the other hand, unfortunately, the flexible attitude of our negotiating team failed to be reciprocated by the Albanian negotiating team, which maintained a rigid and uncompromising attitude: independence at any cost.

With regard to the completion of the reconstruction and compensation programme in the wake of ethnic cleansing against the Serbs in March 2004, it is important to underline the fact that security is the top issue and the top priority that has to be dealt with.

The lack of progress in the return of the displaced and exiled population, which has been recognized, is particularly worrisome. Without getting into details about the methodologies that some organizations apply to record the returnees, we call attention to the fact that even the most optimistic of those records indicate a maximum of 5 per cent of returnees. The real numbers do not exceed 2 per cent. I also wish to point out that the return of the internally displaced persons can be facilitated and made possible through genuine commitment and joint efforts in the field.

The Kosovo PISG should publicly support the submission of property claims to the Kosovo Property Agency regarding restitution of agricultural and commercial property. However, a genuine wish to resolve the issue is lacking. The Kosovo Property Agency has started receiving claims, but without any media coverage or outreach campaign. The fact that the Agency has still not obtained the funds to process the claims clearly demonstrates that its activities are considered peripheral by the PISG.

It is not a secret that large-scale organized crime, as well as crime in general, including trafficking in human beings and corruption, flourish in Kosovo and Metohija. The trade in and smuggling of drugs and arms continue unhindered before the very eyes of the representatives of the international community, including police and the military. There is no need to stress yet again that Serbia, as a State of which Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part, is more than open to any specialized police and investigative activity which will assist in the eradication of trafficking in human beings and narcotics in the province, because this is not just Kosovo's problem and not just Serbia's problem: it is a European and world problem.

The situation and developments in Kosovo and Metohija should be assessed realistically and responsibly. Here, "realistically" means the point of view of international law and historical and political aspects. "Responsibly" is probably of paramount importance; it presumes that the consequences of our present actions should be anticipated for two, five, 10 or even more years in the future. To force a premature solution would come at a great cost to the region, the province and the international community, which, instead of reaching a sustainable solution, would have to deal with an even more difficult and complex situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

A precipitous solution would not solve the issue, but would be a precedent opening up a Pandora's box, which should be avoided at any cost. It is truly hard to believe that anyone would want to take that responsibility just to meet a certain deadline. I emphasize that patience and patience alone, with eyes wide open to reality and the future, can bring about a true compromise solution to the Kosovo and Metohija issue.

An imposed solution will not be conducive to the resolution of the problem of Kosovo and Metohija. It is quite clear that it is self-deception to believe that Kosovo and Metohija is going to be a special and unique case. The point is that any imposed solution will inevitably generate unforeseeable and fatal consequences.

I would like to share that feeling of responsibility. Together with the leaders in my Government and with my country, I wish to say to the Council, loud and clear, that a sustainable, compromise solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija can be reached only if artificial deadlines — and the philosophy of Kosovo as a special case — are set aside.

The Serbian side therefore believes that the settlement of the Kosovo and Metohija problem lies in

the implementation of the principles and concrete solutions based on the platform of the Serbian negotiating team regarding the future status of Kosovo and Metohija. In the long run, that is the only way ahead towards the proper resolution of the dire situation in the province. The international community ought to support this, and show by its deeds that it is in favour of a stable and safe region. That can be achieved only by taking a step towards establishing the rule of law, by bringing the criminals and terrorists to justice and punishing them and by ensuring security and all the other preconditions for a normal life.

Furthermore, the necessary political steps should be taken to persuade the Albanian side to give up extreme, exclusive demands and to embrace a rational compromise solution — namely, substantial autonomy with comprehensive competencies. At the same time, the Albanians will gain the Serbs as strategic partners for the future. Without the Serbs, Albanians will not go far, and they should not routinely reject the reasonable and generous offers from our side. Despite the evident difficulties, there is still enough scope for an agreement, based on democratic principles and European standards.

The President: I will now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We would like to thank Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement. We also welcome the presence among us this morning of the Prime Minister of Kosovo.

We congratulate the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, and thank him for his briefing today. My delegation pledges its support and cooperation to him and wishes him a successful tenure of office. We are also grateful to the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his dedicated service, diplomatic skill and tireless efforts at the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) during the past two years.

Tanzania is encouraged by the stage reached in the future status process for Kosovo. We reaffirm our confidence in the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, and commend him for conducting the high-level meeting in Vienna on 24 July bringing together the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo. The fact that such high-power delegations were able to meet is in itself a remarkable achievement, despite the persisting differences. We encourage them to persevere on the path of dialogue to determine the future status of Kosovo.

While acknowledging the distance between their stated positions on substantial autonomy versus full independence, we urge them nonetheless to show more flexibility and compromise so as to narrow down their differences and find common ground, in the interests of a peaceful and sustainable solution to the status of Kosovo.

My delegation is pleased to note the progress made on the implementation of standards by the Kosovo authorities and the adoption of the European Partnership Action Plan, which replaces the 2004 Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan. This is yet another display of the commitment of the Government of Kosovo to the political process. We encourage it to continue with standards implementation in parallel with the talks on the future status. The implementation adds confidence and momentum to the talks.

We have also noted the shift of the decentralization process from Pristina to the future status process. This change should bring a fresh impetus to the decentralization issue, which is also crucial to the whole peace process in Kosovo.

The question of the inclusion of the Serb minority in both the future status talks and the Kosovo Institutions remains a stumbling block to a true multi-ethnic, multicultural society. It is imperative that the Serb minority fully participate in both. We reiterate our call to the Republic of Serbia to encourage it to take part in the process and to the Kosovo leadership to step up its effort to reach out to the minority groups. Both sides should promote initiatives that will enhance mutual trust, tolerance and coexistence.

In the same vein, efforts should also be geared towards creating an environment more favourable for returnees. In this regard, we welcome the signing, in Pristina on 6 June by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Belgrade and Pristina representatives, of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns, which had an immediate impact on some returnees. However, many more are still reluctant to return, owing to economic and security factors. We appeal to donors and to the international

community as a whole to provide the required funding to encourage the voluntary smooth return and reintegration of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, including restitution and compensation relating to property claims.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/707) states that it remains stable but fragile. We commend KFOR, UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service for taking measures to enhance security throughout Kosovo. However, we are concerned about incidents that have led to breaches of security, especially those targeting individuals and religious sites. The reported increased vandalism against Serbian Orthodox churches is deplorable and must be stopped forthwith. We support the efforts of the Kosovo police to increase security at such sites.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to UNMIK, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations family in Kosovo and other funding organizations for their coordinated efforts and their contribution to the peace process in Kosovo.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's Security Council meeting of the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, as well as of the Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, and the delegation accompanying him.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), as well as of the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, regarding the situation in Kosovo, Republic of Serbia. The attainment of concrete, effective progress in the work on standards remains one of the factors determining the pace and productiveness of the status dialogue.

At the ministerial meeting of the Group of Eight in Moscow, it was emphasized in particular that Kosovo must remain multi-ethnic. The leadership of the province must give particular attention to the implementation of standards defined by the international community with respect to ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, despite some positive steps, achievements in this area cannot be described as significant, and the activities of the Provisional Institutions in Kosovo remain insufficient and inconsistent.

Above all, it is also too early to say that the necessary guarantees of the rights and security of minority representatives, particularly of the Serbs, are in place. We are seriously concerned that the number of ethnically motivated crimes has again skyrocketed in the province, as the report makes clear. The unfortunate situation in that regard was highlighted by the recent incident in northern Mitrovica, where a grenade was thrown into a Serbian café. Crimes against the Serbian ethnic minority are often still not fully investigated and their perpetrators go unpunished. To question the fact that the overwhelming majority of those crimes are ethnically motivated is to disregard facts with which we are all familiar.

The situation with regard to freedom of movement is equally dire. Minorities remain fearful and feel that the roads remain unsafe. The problems of decentralization and the protection of the religious and cultural heritage of minorities are also far from resolved. Like the Secretary-General, we strongly condemn the increasing incidence of vandalism of Serbian Orthodox religious shrines in Kosovo. The situation demands heightened accountability in that regard on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other European organizations.

The situation with regard to the return of refugees and communities is also unsatisfactory, as borne out, inter alia, by the figures provided in the report. In that context, we welcome the agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina, which represent a step in the right direction. However, if we are to redress the situation, we need primarily concrete and, above all, financial measures to improve living conditions in the province and to remove obstacles to the returns process.

We understand the Secretary-General's concern over the severing by the northern municipalities of relations with the provisional authorities. We call for the establishment of independent security mechanisms. We support the appeal made in the report to all parties to refrain from making provocative accusations and to strive to find a constructive solution to those issues.

However, the non-participation by the Kosovo Serbs in the activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government also demonstrates just how far Kosovo remains from completing the main task of creating a multi-ethnic and democratic society. Among minorities, the level of trust in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government remains very low. The majority community must create a climate that encourages the minorities, the Kosovo Serbs in particular, to cooperate with the provincial authorities and to participate in all spheres of life in Kosovo. We consider attempts to blame Belgrade for the non-participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to be wrong-headed.

We urge the leaders of the province vigorously to intensify their efforts to register real and sustainable progress in the implementation of standards, above all those that are of crucial importance to ensuring the Kosovo's multi-ethnic character. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that we must not lose sight of the fact that all standards without exception are of great importance to the future of Kosovo and that further progress in implementing other standards is just as essential. We hope that the Contact Group will carefully monitor implementation of standards by the provincial leaders.

Of course, the Serbian side has to play its part here, too. The attainment of concrete and effective progress in standards implementation is one of the determining factors impacting on the pace and productivity of the negotiating process to determine the future status of Kosovo. Only a sustainable qualitative redressing of the standards situation can lay the foundation for its productive advancement through the mediation of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, to find a balanced, negotiated compromise between Belgrade and Pristina.

Like the Secretary-General, we welcome the onset of a new phase in the Kosovo settlement — the beginning of a political dialogue at the highest level on status affairs. Of course, it would be difficult to hope for much more from the first high-level meeting, at which a very natural exchange of claims took place. Nevertheless, the option proposed by Belgrade for broad or substantial autonomy for Kosovo is open-ended; in other words, it can be adjusted over the course of time. It offers a basis for negotiations that would permit a smooth and gradual transition to the issue of the province's status. That particular approach is consistent with the task of strengthening the stability of the Balkans.

The Secretary-General is right to note the need for the parties to the talks to show greater flexibility and a spirit of compromise. They must find points of convergence and a long-term, mutually acceptable solution. In that regard, the international community's support remains a crucial factor for progress. The positions of the countries of the region and of other interested European States and participants in the Kosovo Force must be taken into account. It is also important to take into consideration the situation with regard to the Serbian enclaves in the northern part of the province, whose situation demonstrates just how long it will take even to establish the most basic cooperation between the parties.

In any event, any decision on the future status of the province must be a universal one. Only a negotiated decision on Kosovo, and not one that is imposed and one-sided or that will set a negative precedent in the context of international crisis settlement, can be supported by the Security Council. It is already clear that even an optimal scenario for genuine and lasting results on standards implementation and for the drafting of solutions by the parties to the status talks will take quite some time to evolve. In that connection, we deem it counterproductive to establish any arbitrary time frames.

A negotiated solution on the future status of Kosovo is a priority for Russia. That is the gist of the Contact Group's statement following the Vienna summit negotiations, which clearly refers to making progress towards a decision on the basis of compromise.

Our delegation associates itself with the Secretary-General's words of gratitude to the former head of UNMIK, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, and welcomes the appointment of Mr. Rücker as Special Representative for Kosovo. We hope that, under his guidance, UNMIK will strictly abide by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), as well as the guidelines of the Contact Group and the ministerial declaration it issued in London on 31 January.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): I wish to congratulate Ambassador Joachim Rücker on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General

and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and also add my word of appreciation for his briefing. As the former Deputy Special Representative and head of the Economic Reconstruction Programme of UNMIK, Ambassador Rücker no doubt has the requisite experience to help the people of Kosovo along the path towards a more peaceful, united and stable future.

UNMIK remains, as ever, an indispensable bridge to peaceful coexistence and reconciliation between the Kosovo Albanians and their Serbian counterparts and other minorities. We take this opportunity also to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, in laying the foundation for Kosovo's future progress.

The overall improvement in the security situation is most welcome, especially the marked reduction in inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as the strengthening of border and boundary controls.

The transfer of further competencies to the Kosovo ministries of internal affairs and justice and related initiatives are an essential part of the institutional capacity-building necessary for good governance.

At the same time, we must commend the Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, for having worked hard to ensure that the summit-level meeting between the authorities in Serbia and Kosovo took place in Vienna on 24 July. We believe that the convening of the summit was a very significant step forward, in spite of the seemingly irreconcilable differences between the parties as to whether Kosovo should emerge from the talks a fully independent country or an autonomous province within Serbia but with substantial powers of self-government.

My delegation recognizes that the question is an exceedingly complex and delicate one. Therefore we can only encourage the two sides to show flexibility in their positions and continue negotiating in good faith, in order to reach a settlement that neither glosses over the realities on the ground — not least the rights of all ethnic groups in Kosovo — nor takes for granted the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia.

In that connection, we reiterate our previous calls on the Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic minorities to take an active part in shaping the future of their homeland by participating in the Provisional Institutions.

We are also hopeful that the ongoing wide-ranging talks on matters such as the decentralization of governmental functions in Kosovo, municipal boundaries, community rights, cultural heritage and religious sites, as well as economic issues, will help bring greater clarity to the future status talks and assist the parties to weigh their options with the necessary pragmatism.

The implementation of standards is designed to help Kosovo to make a clean break with its unfortunate past and is critical to its long-term unity and stability, whatever the outcome of the final status process. It is only through a rigorous implementation of the standards, which have now been realigned with the European Partnership Action Plan, that a new culture of tolerance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, inclusiveness and mutual respect among the various ethnic groups can be fostered. The standards must be woven into the social fabric of Kosovo if they are to make the desired impact.

We therefore urge the Government of Kosovo not to relent in its efforts to implement the standards and also to reach out to the Kosovo Serbs and make them partners in the transformation of Kosovo into a gentler and kinder society. For their part, the Kosovo Serbs and the authorities in Belgrade likewise may wish to keep in mind that what matters most, ultimately, is the kind of society that Kosovo turns out to be after the dust has settled on the current political process.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his presentation, and to wish him every success in his new post at this crucial time for the future of Kosovo. In particular, he will be responsible for preparing for the transition from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the future international presence, which must be very carefully organized.

I should like also to welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, as well as that of Mr. Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo, as part of the delegation headed by Mr. Rücker.

The Permanent Representative of Finland will make a statement later on behalf of the European

Union presidency. I associate myself fully with that statement. However, I wish to touch on several points.

First, we note that the report of the Secretary-General highlights the progress that has been made with regard to the implementation of standards, in keeping with the request submitted by Council members. This is a positive development, but it must be further expanded. All of the standards must be implemented rapidly, in a concrete manner, in particular with regard to the 13 priorities identified by UNMIK and by the Contact Group with regard to the protection of minorities and the rule of law.

The efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo to build a multi-ethnic country will play an important role in defining the future status of Kosovo. Moreover, the dialogue undertaken by the provisional authorities addressing minorities, starting with the Serb minority, must be intensified.

No lasting stability will be possible in the absence of reconciliation among communities. Unacceptable acts of violence against minorities make it clear that such a reconciliation lies far ahead in the future. The perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice. However, such a necessary reconciliation will require also the Serbian authorities to participate in full in the Provisional Institutions, which is in their own interest. In that respect, we share the concerns outlined by the Secretary-General with regard to the pressure that has been brought to bear on the Kosovo Serbs to dissuade them doing so. The authorities in Belgrade must encourage such participation and not seek to impede it.

The report of the Secretary-General also underlines the increasing tension in northern Kosovo. Whatever the future status of Kosovo may be, we will have to devise realistic operational arrangements that will provide for development in northern Kosovo. Increased decentralization must preserve the identity and protect the rights of the various communities.

It is regrettable that several municipal assemblies have decided to suspend cooperation with the Provisional Institutions. Belgrade and Pristina must work to encourage local leaders to build confidence. In any case, we certainly would rule out any notion of partition.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its full support for the negotiation process that is under way under the auspices of Mr. Ahtisaari. While the positions of the parties remain divergent, as is underlined in the report of the Secretary-General, it is more pressing than ever before for the parties to become involved in a constructive manner and to show flexibility with regard to the status issue and also with regard to the constituent elements of the status.

We hope that the process will result in a negotiated settlement. In any case, it is imperative that a solution be found by the deadline that we have set, that is, by the end of 2006, both in order to assuage any feelings of impatience and to prevent any further delays in resolving a problem that threatens regional stability.

Whatever form the future status of Kosovo may take, it must be in keeping with the European architecture. From that perspective, we deem imperative progress towards achieving a multi-ethnic and democratic society. We look to Belgrade and Pristina to contribute actively in that respect.

Mr. Pereyra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his presentation of the report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 1 May to 14 August of this year. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Rücker on having taken up his new post on 1 September, and we wish him every success in his future work.

I am grateful also for the information provided us this morning by Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

The delegation of Peru indicated earlier the vital need to progress towards implementing all the standards. Whatever the final status of Kosovo may be, it must be democratic in nature. There must be respect for civil liberties; political, religious and cultural tolerance; respect for minorities; economic opportunities for all; and a regular transfer of power. The European vision for the region must take shape there.

My delegation welcomes the positive efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo to implement the standards. However, we deplore the fact that

obstacles still bar the way to achieving the progress requested by the Contact Group in a number of areas.

All the parties concerned must redouble their efforts to move forward and promote confidence among Kosovo's communities — for example, confidence in democratic institutions, the rule of law, voluntary and sustainable return, community rights, the Comprehensive Action Plan against Discrimination, respect for cultural heritage, the Working Group on Missing Persons and the proposal to ensure security for minorities.

The delegation of Peru believes that building a multi-ethnic and democratic society requires active cooperation by all the sectors involved. Without that basis, it will be very difficult to find a lasting solution of regional peace and stability, even if a definition of status is achieved.

Another aspect that my country considers essential in standards implementation is progress in building a viable economy with sufficient productive capacity to ensure the economic sustainability of democracy in Kosovo.

Peru wishes to reiterate that to move beyond this transitional phase there must be significant progress in rebuilding Kosovo's economy with a view to achieving its competitive integration into the regional arena. Recent Latin American experience clearly shows us that a competitive market economy bolsters the rule of law and the stability of political systems. That applies also to Kosovo. A production and services structure that generates opportunities for the local population is essential to reduce crime and other social ills that unfortunately affect Kosovo and have an impact beyond its borders. Even the most recent incidents in northern Kosovo can be analysed in terms of the unemployment situation.

The delegation of Peru wishes to reaffirm its support for the political process aimed at finding a negotiated solution to Kosovo's future status. We hope that the parties will not hamper the discussions to which they have committed themselves and that they will help in good faith to overcome any circumstances that might prevent them from moving forward with realism and pragmatism to achieve the well-being of the peoples that they represent.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/707) and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Rücker — whom I congratulate on his assumption of that important post — for his briefing. We also welcome Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and thank her for addressing our meeting.

We have noted that during the past few months, as a result of the joint efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, standards implementation has made significant progress in a number of priority areas. However, that progress is not sufficiently comprehensive; challenges remain, particularly in areas such as security, refugee returns, culture and ethnic integration. The majority ethnic group in Kosovo bears a major responsibility for creating a stable social environment conducive to the harmonious coexistence of ethnic groups. Other parties should also actively cooperate in that effort.

Many aspects of standards implementation have a bearing on the future status process for Kosovo. We hope that, with UNMIK's help, Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and their leaders can overcome these difficulties and implement the standards in a comprehensive and effective manner.

Since the launching of the future status process for Kosovo at the end of last year, the Serbian Government and Kosovo authorities, with the good offices and coordination provided by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Ahtisaari, have held many rounds of direct talks. The first high-level meeting was held in July this year. That kind of dialogue has enabled the two parties to fully understand each other's positions and to achieve some common understanding; thus it is essential in order to maintain the momentum of cooperation and the search for a sustainable solution. China welcomes the continuation of this dialogue and supports efforts to reach a settlement acceptable to both parties through peaceful negotiations.

The Kosovo issue concerns the stability and prosperity of the Balkans and the surrounding areas. In order to resolve that issue, it is necessary to hear the views of all the parties. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is an important principle of

international law. China has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the Balkans.

We have always believed that, in order to find an appropriate and comprehensive solution to the Kosovo issue, we must effectively implement the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, encourage both parties and help them to reach a compromise through consultations and negotiations. We hope that the parties will continue to move the political process forward with a view to resolving the Kosovo issue in a spirit of sincerity and pragmatism.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I should like to add my voice to those of others in the Chamber today welcoming the recently appointed United Nations Special Representative, Mr. Rücker. We are very lucky to have someone of his experience and knowledge in Kosovo appointed by the Secretary-General. We look forward to working very closely with him, as we did with his predecessor. I would like to associate the United Kingdom with all the tributes that have been paid today to Mr. Jessen-Petersen. I would also like to welcome back to the Council Prime Minister Agim Çeku and Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic.

The United Kingdom also associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The United Kingdom is pleased to see from the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2006/707) that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Çeku, standards implementation in Kosovo continues across the board. I have listened very carefully to what people have said in the Council today, and I think we all agree that substantial progress has been made on a number of key issues important to Kosovo's minority communities. In that connection, I would like to commend to colleagues the note circulated to the Council today by Prime Minister Çeku, which gives some more detail about what has been achieved.

I think we are also all agreed that the progress that has been achieved needs to continue and to be accelerated. Neither the international community nor the Provisional Institutions can be complacent or take continued implementation of standards for granted. Progress must continue, and sustained outreach to Kosovo's communities is required to explain the importance of, and obtain support for, the meaningful implementation of standards in Kosovo. That, above all, is something that must fall to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government themselves; it is not something that the international community can do for them.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, systematic attention is required across the board if the momentum reported today is to be maintained. Part of the role of the Council is to encourage all the parties to work towards that goal. The Contact Group sought to complement the effort by putting forward, in coordination with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), 13 clear and achievable priority areas for early implementation. The United Kingdom is encouraged that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have fully completed six of these and that most of the others are on schedule. But partial implementation is not enough. We hope that no effort will be spared to implement the remaining priorities in the coming weeks. In particular, we look to the Kosovo Assembly to finalize the adoption of laws on languages and cultural heritage as soon as possible.

A number of challenges lie ahead for the people of Kosovo. We heard today from Ms. Raskovic-Ivic and from the Russian Permanent Representative about acts of violence against Kosovo Serbs. I would like to make it clear that the United Kingdom condemns such acts of violence. They are totally unacceptable, and we look to the Pristina authorities to find and try the perpetrators and to help create conditions that prevent such attacks from occurring. But I would also like to make it clear that the attacks, however deplorable, do not in themselves alter the direction of travel in which Kosovo is going.

I note from what Mr. Rücker said that UNMIK and KFOR have expanded their presence north of the Ibar. That is important, and we welcome that contribution from both organizations. But it is disappointing that there is a need for them to do so. We call on all sides, including the Kosovo Serbs, to refrain from causing or exacerbating tensions. We are disappointed that events there were used as an excuse to break off dialogue. I would like to associate the United Kingdom very firmly with what Mr. Rücker said about integration, not isolation, being the way forward for the Kosovo Serb community.

In that connection, I once again appeal to Belgrade to encourage cooperation between the

Kosovo Serbs and the Pristina authorities. When the Council last met to address the issue of Kosovo, a number of us issued that appeal. It is disappointing that we have to reiterate it today. I am thinking, in particular, of the edict issued by the Serbian Coordination Centre to encourage Kosovo Serb communities to withdraw from health and educational institutions. It is hard to see how that is in the interests of those communities. It is certainly not in the interests of Kosovo's future.

This meeting was supposed to be focused on standards, but a number of other speakers have touched on status. I would therefore like to do so. The standards process in Kosovo needs to be seen in the context of support for the status process, currently led by Martti Ahtisaari. I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's fullest support the United Nations Special Envoy and for his approach to the status process. I think that it is disappointing again that in all of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic's statement today there was no mention of Mr. Ahtisaari, no mention of his work and no mention of the duty of all of us to cooperate with him to the best of our ability and the extent possible.

I would like to state that the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to the principles set out in the 31 January ministerial Contact Group statement, including the target of agreement by the end of 2006, and to the Contact Group guiding principles.

Independence is an option for Kosovo — some would say that it is the only option that will bring lasting peace and security to the region. At the same time, it is for those who seek that outcome to give practical reassurance to the minority that the multi-ethnic Kosovo to which many speakers have referred today will become a reality and can take its proper place in Europe. We will spare no effort, as the United Kingdom, to work towards a settlement that provides long-term security and stability for the Balkans region as it moves along this path. The nature of the Kosovo situation makes this a unique and distinct political process. Its outcome will necessarily require unique and distinct solutions.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): I would like at the outset to join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Joachim Rücker for his comprehensive presentation. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate him on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Kosovo is now at a crucial juncture, and completing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has taken on even greater importance. Japan looks forward to the leadership and efforts of Mr. Rücker in that regard. I would also like to extend our appreciation to Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement, and to welcome the presence in the Council Chamber of Prime Minister Çeku of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo.

Much attention is currently being given to the status talks. In that connection, the Government of Japan would like to express its continuous support for the efforts of Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. Japan recognizes the importance of the so-called bottom-up approach, which includes efforts to take up status-neutral issues. This approach will certainly contribute to confidence-building among the parties. We also fully support the initiatives undertaken by the Contact Group to promote the status process. Reaching an agreement will be no easy task. However, we sincerely call upon all relevant parties to engage in the process in a flexible and constructive manner with a view to finding a mutually acceptable formula. From that point of view, we particularly welcome the holding of high-level direct talks in Vienna on 24 July, and we hope that that will be the starting point for the acceleration of the process.

The implementation of the standards for Kosovo is as important a challenge as the final status issue. In the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), concrete progress was reported on those priority areas set by the Contact Group in June this year. We welcome this progress and encourage the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Çeku, to continue their active and determined efforts towards the implementation of the standards.

We must admit, however, to a certain degree of concern regarding the implementation of the standards. Apart from positive signs in many of the standards, a gap in the level of implementation among the standards has been shown to exist. The question of the investigation and prosecution of cases relating to the March 2004 riots is one example of the issues which should be addressed immediately. We stress that point because we believe that it is essential to improve the

credibility of the judicial system in order to establish a stable, democratic and inclusive society.

Increasing outreach to minority communities by Kosovo leaders is also essential in order to facilitate the status process. The implementation of the standards is an indispensable condition for the building of a democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. Thus, steady implementation is required, regardless of the final status.

I would also like to mention one other, related, matter: the question of the participation of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's institutions. The Government of Japan expresses its concern about the cessation of contacts with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government by three municipalities in northern Kosovo. We urge those municipalities to resume their contacts with the Provisional Institutions immediately. In addition, I would like to note our serious concern about the measures taken by Serbian authorities which discourage the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions, and our support for the report of the Secretary-General in calling on the Belgrade authorities to remove all impediments of that kind.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to add a final comment. Since the tension on the ground continues to heighten as the status process advances, I would like to express our sincere wish for all leaders of Serbia and Kosovo to reaffirm their determination to resolve the issue by peaceful means only, and for all the people in the region to calmly support the development of the status process.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Rücker for his briefing. We wish him every success in his responsible mission. On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to welcome the participation of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and the presence of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Mr. Çeku, at this meeting.

The process of determining future status, launched in October last year, is moving ahead. In this context, we look forward to the upcoming consultations with Mr. Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process, which Slovakia fully supports. In that connection, we continue to believe that the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is still vital and instrumental to peace and the stable future of the region.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later at this meeting by the Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. That is why I will limit myself to the following points.

First of all, we thank the Secretary-General for his evaluation of the situation in Kosovo, contained in his latest report. We note with satisfaction the high-level participation of both sides in the political process to determine the future status of Kosovo, but we also share the disappointment of the Secretary-General that little common ground has been identified in that regard. We support the Secretary-General's appeal to the parties to demonstrate much more flexibility and generosity and to engage in the talks in the spirit of compromise, as it is their responsibility to do.

Secondly, we note with satisfaction the commitment with which Prime Minister Çeku and the Government of Kosovo have addressed the crucial issue of standards implementation. We share the Secretary-General's call upon Pristina to ensure that those efforts are maintained and that they are sustainable, and we hope soon to see the tangible results of the implementation of legislative measures adopted by the Kosovo Assembly. We wish to emphasize here that standards implementation is equally essential to the European perspective of the province. In that regard, we must make sure that there is no semblance of double standards. That is a fundamental precondition for national reconciliation and a determining factor in the period after the identification of the future status of Kosovo. Therefore, we also continue to believe that standards implementation still deserve a thorough-paced overview and attention from UNMIK and the Council, with special attention to the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group in June.

Thirdly, we share the concerns mentioned in the report regarding the situation in the northern part of Kosovo province, and especially the increasing number of incidents of violence targeting people and religious sites. We align ourselves with the strong condemnation by the Secretary-General, especially of violence of an inter-ethnic nature, and we appeal to the Kosovo institutions to address the security issue as a matter of the highest priority. No impunity should be tolerated,

and we reiterate here the need for a thorough investigation and the bringing to justice of all perpetrators. That is an important element for peaceful coexistence and confidence-building between all communities living in Kosovo. We also believe that the international community must retain its presence in the north of Kosovo after the status determination as a vital aspect of the issue of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, especially those belonging to the Serbian national minority.

We welcome the signing of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns by both sides, and we note with appreciation its immediate positive impact resulting in the return of more than 70 Serbian families. Nevertheless, we share the report's observation that the number of minority returnees is not satisfactory, although it is the number by which the project of creating the desired multi-ethnic Kosovo will be measured in real life.

Fourthly, we would like to join other speakers in calling on Belgrade to encourage the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the future status process, as well as the engagement of Kosovo Serbs in the political life of Kosovo, in order to influence the processes that will be decisive for their own future. We also call on Belgrade and Pristina to allow Kosovo Serbs to exercise their rights in a way that will contribute to the positive atmosphere of the negotiating process, as well as to the stabilization of the region.

In that regard, we would like to encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue its efforts and to undertake all necessary measures for building the trust of Serbs in Government institutions. The situation of the Kosovo Serbs and their trust in Kosovo's institutions will be an important factor for success in building a multi-ethnic Kosovo. We agree in that regard with Mr. Rücker that Serbs and Albanians will have to live together regardless of the final status of Kosovo and that they must learn to live together in an atmosphere of tolerance and peace in order to support the stability of the whole region.

Last but not least, I would like to repeat here that we support the need to find a lasting and sustainable settlement for the future status of Kosovo. We continue to believe that it is still important to seek a balanced settlement and compromise from both Belgrade and Pristina through direct talks and dialogue that reflect the objective concerns of all parties involved and contribute to the lasting security and stability of the region.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the excellent cooperation between UNMIK and KFOR. In that context, I would like to reassure you, Sir, that Slovakia, as a troop-contributing country to KFOR, is ready to continue in its dedication to peace, stabilization and integration processes in the Balkans.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I welcome Mr. Joachim Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo. I wish him every success in the discharge of his responsibilities. I thank him for his preparation of the technical assessment of progress in implementation of the standards for Kosovo, annexed to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We also pay tribute to the remarkable job done by his predecessor, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, during his term of office over the past two years.

We must also recognize the important role played by UNMIK, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in support of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the fight against crime and the transfer of powers to those Institutions in preparation for the implementation of a political settlement under resolution 1244 (1999).

Recent months have witnessed an acceleration in the implementation of the standards for Kosovo and in the talks between Pristina and Belgrade. The Special Representative's technical assessment of progress in implementation of the standards refers to the declaration by the Government of Kosovo that most of the 13 priorities determined by the Contact Group have been implemented. That bears witness to the importance of the standards being implemented, whatever the future status of Kosovo may be. It is our hope that the Government of Prime Minister Çeku will continue to honour its declared commitment to placing the standards on its list of priorities.

Recent months have also witnessed the first high-level meeting between the two parties, held in Vienna between the President and the Prime Minister of Serbia and the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo. The meeting was followed by three additional rounds of direct talks between the two parties. Those meetings — in which Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the

Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo, played an important role — have highlighted the ongoing divisions between the two parties on the future status of Kosovo. They nevertheless represent an important step forward in the process of reaching a lasting and sustainable settlement.

One prerequisite for finding a sustainable solution for the future of Kosovo is the effective participation of Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians in the Government institutions and in all the activities of the State and society. They must also participate in the dialogue if it is to enjoy credibility and continuity. Both parties must encourage such participation and refrain from taking any measure to discourage or impede it. The future of Kosovo will be neither stable nor prosperous if it is not built on multi-ethnicity. That is why national consensus and reconciliation are critical to the future of a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

The people and Government of Kosovo have borne the responsibility for all communities to feel secure in their life, work and movement within Kosovo. The number of returnees to Kosovo reached around 770 persons in the first half of this year. That is not sufficient. Encouraging the return of refugees requires both financial support and tangible progress in the political process. One of the conditions for reaching a sustainable solution is for all parties to make all possible efforts to preserve the stability of the security situation in order to prevent any form of ethnic violence that targets people or religious sites, and to bring to justice those who are responsible for perpetrating such acts.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States): The United States welcomes new Special Representative Rücker to the Council. We are pleased that Mr. Rücker has been appointed by the Secretary-General to lead the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) at this critical time. Mr. Rücker has done an admirable job as the Head of UNMIK's Pillar IV, particularly in advancing the privatization of Kosovo's former State-owned enterprises. We look forward to supporting his efforts to help UNMIK build meaningful self-government in Kosovo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We also look forward to working closely with UNMIK and Kosovo's Provisional Government in furthering progress on standards implementation. While the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707) notes progress in that area, more must be done to make Kosovo a place where all communities can live freely and safely.

While we applaud Prime Minister Çeku for his Government's completion of several of the Contact Group's priority standards, ongoing efforts to complete the remaining items must be intensified, with particular attention paid to passing internationally accepted laws on languages and cultural heritage and implementing the comprehensive rental programme for housing currently administered by the Kosovo Property Agency.

We strongly condemn the 26 August incident in northern Mitrovica that resulted in injuries to several civilians. We call upon all sides to reject any form of violence, and we note the importance of bringing to justice the individual or individuals responsible for that crime and other violent incidents in Kosovo.

We also note with concern recent political developments in northern Kosovo and call upon all parties to act with restraint and in coordination with UNMIK and President Ahtisaari in seeking solutions to the longstanding tensions in the region. Belgrade must also do its part to help improve the situation in Kosovo. In particular, the Government in Serbia should take immediate steps that would support Kosovo Serb participation in local institutions, return cadastral records taken from Kosovo and rescind its directive instructing many Kosovo Serbs not to accept salaries from Kosovo's Government.

United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari continues to enjoy our full support, and we look forward to future Security Council consultations with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. It is incumbent upon both Pristina and Belgrade to enhance their cooperation with President Ahtisaari. After eight months of negotiations on technical issues, both sides must now make difficult compromises on decentralization, protection of religious and cultural heritage and community rights.

As noted by the Contact Group in January, all possible efforts should be made to achieve a negotiated settlement in the course of the year 2006. Delay on resolving Kosovo's status benefits neither side and creates further instability. Both sides must be realistic about the outcome of the status process. Kosovo must remain multi-ethnic, and the settlement must be acceptable to the people of Kosovo. Additionally, there will be no return of Kosovo to the pre-1999 situation.

no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any other, or part of another, country.

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to associate myself with the thanks addressed to Mr. Joachim Rücker for his briefing. At the same time, I would like to assure him of the support of my delegation in the exercise of his new duties as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). His commitment and his experience of working within UNMIK reinforce our feeling that his new mission will be successful, at a time when negotiations on the definition of the future status of Kosovo are entering into a critical phase.

The briefing we have just heard, in addition to the dense report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), gives us a better picture of the developments in the field.

The presence here of Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, the President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo of the Republic of Serbia, also gave us valuable testimony concerning the realities of the situation on the ground, which my delegation greatly appreciates.

We share the analysis of the Secretary-General with regard to progress made. We welcome that progress, as it seems to reflect the response that we all were expecting with regard to the Council's repeatedly expressed concerns with regard to the lack of progress in standards implementation.

Three months after our last meeting on the situation in Kosovo, the Council's appeal for effective implementation of standards increasingly seems to have been heeded. The report of the Secretary-General shows that, despite some challenges that remain, the Kosovo authorities, under the leadership of Prime Minister Agim Çeku, have shown great commitment in that area. Whether it concerns the implementation of the 13 priorities defined last June by the Contact Group, or security — although that is still fragile — or education, transportation, the return of refugees or minority rights, we must say that during the reporting period, more than before, a real effort was made to seek solutions to specific problems encountered by the various communities.

Those efforts must, of course, be continued. That is why we call upon all of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to continue to take the necessary steps to make the needed improvements on the ground that are conducive to the sustainable settlement of the situation. Those improvements are particularly essential with regard to national reconciliation, reconciliation among the various populations regarding security, respect for the cultural and religious heritage of Kosovo and the establishment of constructive and trusting relations among the minorities.

We also appeal to the Belgrade authorities to promote better participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions. We believe that the harmonious functioning of the Institutions, including the participation of everyone, is the only guarantee for the effective implementation of standards. Everyone has stressed the importance and the impact of that in the final settlement of the question of Kosovo.

My delegation renews its conviction that building a multi-ethnic democratic society serving the interest of all communities offers the best conditions for a lasting solution and for the stability of the region. Congo therefore attaches great importance to the implementation of those benchmarks. We think they are decisive for the better ownership by the Kosovo people of their future. Whatever the future orientation, it will help to improve the daily lives of everyone and to introduce the prospect of Kosovo being integrated into Europe.

Of course the international community will continue to fully support the political process here, but it still remains that it is primarily up to the two parties to demonstrate the necessary political will, which is the only way to promote a final and lasting solution to this conflict that has gone on for far too long. We therefore hope that the parties will move along those lines, in this decisive phase, which is being guided by Mr. Martti Ahtisaari.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Like others, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, for his very useful briefing. We welcome him to his new and immensely challenging duties and look forward to working with him at this crucial time for the future of Kosovo. I would also like to thank the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of

Serbia for Kosovo, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, for her statement.

I associate myself fully with the statement to be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We are pleased to note that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have made significant efforts to improve the implementation of standards since the last report. Denmark would like to welcome the commitment to move forward shown by the Administration in Pristina. However, there are a number of areas where further attention is needed, not least within those of the rule of law and freedom of movement. Security incidents, whether or not they are ethnically motivated, undermine reconciliation and threaten progress.

We welcome the concrete steps taken by the Provisional Institutions to improve conditions for Kosovo's minorities. However, it is clear that those steps do not automatically improve relations between the majority and the minorities. The leadership of the Provisional Institutions needs to create confidence among all of Kosovo's groups. That can be achieved only by outreach and by showing a genuine willingness to compromise.

We are very concerned about the step taken by municipalities in northern Kosovo to end contacts with the Provisional Institutions and to set up parallel structures. Encouraging a spirit of non-cooperation is not in anyone's best interest. We urge Belgrade to encourage Kosovo Serb representatives to participate constructively in the Provisional Institutions in Pristina, and not least in the municipal bodies.

We all wish for a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future. Non-cooperation, isolation and entrenched positions will not lead to a better future. Flexibility and compromise are prerequisites for a sustainable solution. The primary beneficiaries will be all Kosovars, regardless of ethnic group, the population of the Republic of Serbia and, indeed, all the people of the Western Balkans. Therefore, cooperation and participation are in everyone's best interest.

My country views Kosovo as a key regional issue. Denmark steadfastly supports UNMIK, the UNMIK police and the Kosovo Force. We look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous future, which the peoples of the region deserve. That will entail close regional cooperation towards the common integration of these truly European countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions, where they rightfully belong. However, the Euro-Atlantic perspectives depend upon the implementation of standards and a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future status.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to welcome Mr. Joachim Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I wish him success in his endeavour at this very important stage for the future of Kosovo. We assure him of our full cooperation. We also thank him for the comprehensive report he has just presented to us on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and events in that province.

We would also like to thank Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement. We also welcome the presence at the Council once again of Prime Minister Agim Çeku of Kosovo.

It is encouraging to note the progress made in the two processes that are currently taking place in Kosovo. As we are aware, the process to determine Kosovo's future status has enjoyed high-level active participation from both sides. However, we must acknowledge that the results have thus far been limited as regards common ground between the delegations of Serbia and Kosovo. As the report points out, discussions in the context of that process have included the political situation and underlying issues, such as those pertaining to Kosovo territory north of the River Ibar.

Tensions in the north nevertheless continue. We deplore the incidents of violence that have taken place in recent weeks, the cessation of contact with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government by some municipalities and the organization of parallel security structures. We regret that apprehension and mistrust persist between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo as regards those and other issues. No political agreement or anything else will be lasting in Kosovo without building real trust between the two communities. We believe that the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the governance structures is key to increasing their involvement in political life. We call upon Belgrade to stop discouraging their participation.

In the other process, it is encouraging to know that the ongoing political process has had a positive influence on the willingness of the authorities of Kosovo to meet the standards and to achieve results in that regard, namely, the completion of 5 of the 13 priorities that have been established. That demonstrates the commitment of Kosovo's leaders and its Provisional Institutions to implement the objectives established by the international community.

We take note of the efforts that have been made to make it possible to revitalize the implementation process. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to work energetically on the key areas identified in the report. Among others, those include strengthening contacts with all communities, promoting reconciliation and trust between communities, giving the requisite attention to the security situation and the rule of law, and bringing to justice all those responsible for acts of violence. In other words, through those steps, all communities should be reassured that they will have a place in the future of a multi-ethnic Kosovo, regardless of the final result of the process.

Argentina believes that there cannot be a prosperous and peaceful future for Kosovo without full respect for the diversity of the people living in Kosovo. As the Contact Group has already affirmed, the result of the process to determine the future status will have to be acceptable to the majority of the people of Kosovo. At the same time, however, it will also have to respect and protect the rights of minorities. We urge the parties to live up to the task and to their historic responsibility during the talks on status. In doing so they should show flexibility in their respective positions, in the context of a true spirit of compromise.

Lastly, we urge the Provisional Institutions to persevere with rigorous implementation of the standards, so as to achieve the objective of establishing the foundations for a multi-ethnic and democratic society in Kosovo where all communities that so desire can live in dignity and security.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Greece.

I welcome the presence of the President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic. I would like to join others in welcoming here for the first time Mr. Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I thank him for his presentation. I would also like to welcome, among the delegation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

Greece associates itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit myself to a few brief remarks.

The Secretary-General's report clearly indicates that over the past few months the provisional authorities have continued their efforts towards progress in the implementation of standards. There is now concrete progress in some areas, especially on a number of the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group. This is a positive development which we welcome.

We note once again, however, that additional efforts will be required for all 13 priorities to be implemented. Furthermore, implementation of the rest of the standards — those not on the list of 13 priorities — remains of equal importance for the creation of a multi-ethnic, stable and democratic Kosovo.

We are concerned by the lack of progress in the key areas of decentralization, as well as in other crucial and sensitive areas such as returns, dialogue, and cultural and religious heritage. It is regrettable that, as the Secretary-General mentions in his report, high-level outreach by Kosovo Albanian leaders to minority communities has decreased during the reporting period.

The security situation remains far from satisfactory. We join others in condemning the latest violent incident last month in Kosovska Mitrovica and reiterate the need for all such incidents to be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. We also condemn the increase in incidents of vandalism of Serbian orthodox churches, which undermines the progress made in the reconstruction of religious sites damaged during the violence of March 2004.

We have on many occasions stressed here the need for reconciliation as an absolute requirement for the creation of a peaceful and secure future for all the communities in Kosovo. Reconciliation, however, presupposes the involvement of both the Kosovo Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians. We therefore reiterate the need for the Kosovo Serbs to engage, as the only way to serve their own best interests, with the Provisional Institutions. We kindly urge Belgrade once again to

encourage and not to hamper the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions.

Regarding the ongoing political process for the determination of Kosovo's future status, we reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the Vienna process. We echo the Secretary-General's disappointment over the absence of common ground in the positions of the two parties. We support his call for greater flexibility and a spirit of compromise. We continue to believe that the best outcome will be one that is reached through a negotiated and mutually acceptable settlement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, for a very comprehensive and informative presentation that clearly set out the progress that has been achieved in Kosovo.

I would like to welcome Mr. Rücker in his new post as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. His long-term experience in leading UNMIK Pillar IV gives him an excellent understanding of the situation on the ground and thus the qualifications required for successfully carrying out his new tasks. I would like to underline the European Union's strong support for Mr. Rücker in his efforts to implement resolution 1244 (1999) and to prepare for the transition from UNMIK to the future international presence in Kosovo after the status issue is resolved. Special Representative Rücker will be dealing with the double challenge of supporting the ongoing status negotiations and the preparations for the post-UNMIK period.

I would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the former Special Representative, Søren Jessen-Petersen.

We urge all the parties to cooperate fully with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in a constructive and committed manner. We fully support the Secretary-General's view that Pristina and Belgrade should constructively take part in the status negotiations so as to enable the Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, to complete the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. The Special Envoy will continue to have our fullest support, and we welcome his efforts to reach a negotiated solution.

Resolving the status issue is necessary in order to maintain stability in the western Balkans region. The status quo is unsustainable and must be replaced by a solution that provides lasting peace and stability in the region and promotes Kosovo's European integration. The European Union underlines its long-term commitment to Kosovo.

The EU fully supports UNMIK's efforts, together with those of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Kosovo, to achieve concrete progress on standards implementation. The implementation of the priority requirements are crucial to ensure a multi-ethnic Kosovo, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that all of the standards are important for Kosovo's future. The European Union welcomes the progress which has been achieved in priority areas such as the functioning of democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as sustainable returns and the rights of communities.

While this progress is encouraging, it is clear that the successful implementation of standards for Kosovo will require further efforts by all parties. It is also necessary to prepare for a phased transition from a reform process driven by United Nations standards to a reform process based on the requirements of European integration. That gradual transition has already started.

The European Partnership and the annual progress reports and regular policy and technical dialogue ensured by the European Commission are helping the Kosovo Government to identify the priority areas of reforms needed to move closer to the European Union.

We have already integrated the essence of the Kosovo standards into our European Partnership, which will make for better monitoring and easier implementation. We welcome the Kosovo Government's recently adopted European Partnership Action Plan outlining the Government's strategy for

implementing the merged standards. In parallel with the status process, the PISG must also concentrate on the reform process necessary for preparing for Kosovo's European future.

It is a matter of concern, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, that not all ethnic communities are participating meaningfully in the Provisional Institutions. We share the Secretary-General's concern as to the governance of the portion of Kosovo territory which lies north of the Ibar river. We once again encourage Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo's governance structures. As the Secretary-General points out, the current lack of engagement of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's institutions remains an obstacle to the fulfilment of certain standards. All of Kosovo's citizens should benefit from the same level of social and administrative services. The Serb community living in Kosovo should be clearly and actively encouraged to participate in the Kosovo institutions, in which they can most effectively advocate for their own interests.

The European Union is aware that the Kosovo status process is a major challenge for the international community and has a vital interest in a positive and sustainable outcome. We support the efforts of Special Envoy Ahtisaari to engage both Belgrade and Pristina through direct talks and expert consultations on key areas such as decentralization, cultural heritage and religious sites, as well as economic and minority rights issues. The views of the two sides remain divergent, but the process so far has been useful in clarifying their positions and exploring possible common ground. The EU fully supports those efforts and, through its EU representative to the Kosovo future status process and through the Commission, plays a leading role. The EU also recently welcomed the decision to move forward into direct political talks on the status issue and called upon both sides to engage constructively in that phase of the negotiations.

Depending on the future status settlement, the engagement of the European Union in Kosovo is planned to have three main components: the EU contribution to a possible future international civilian presence, a possible European Security and Defence Policy operation in the broader field of the rule of law, and an EU presence related to the European perspective on Kosovo.

Preparations are well under way in all these areas. An EU planning team has already been established and deployed in Kosovo to make preparations for a possible Security and Defence Policy operation in the fields of police and justice, which are areas crucial for the security and the stability of the region. Preparations for the future EU role in Kosovo are taking place in close cooperation with the European Commission to ensure a coherent approach. High Representative Javier Solana, together with Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, has already prepared three insightful reports on the future European commitment to Kosovo. Those reports serve as a basis for future planning.

We believe that, following a settlement and the phasing out of UNMIK, Kosovo's own institutions should be responsible for managing its affairs as much as possible. Local ownership and accountability should rest with Kosovo. The international engagement should help Kosovo's institutions to assume full responsibility for Kosovo over time, on the basis of rigid benchmarking of performance and capabilities.

The objective of the European Union is to ensure that Kosovo becomes a reliable partner, progressing together with the rest of the region towards the EU. In particular, it needs the political will and genuine commitment of all parties involved in the current status negotiations. As the Secretary-General has noted in his report, it is crucial to reassure all communities that they will have a place in Kosovo in the future, regardless of its status. The future settlement should guarantee the protection of the rights and the identity of all communities in Kosovo.

Together with the Secretary-General, we urge all parties concerned to cease inflammatory accusations and to pursue constructive behaviour to ensure a sustainable future for Kosovo. Belgrade must also play its part in achieving those aims. Serbia has a crucial role in the efforts to stabilize the Western Balkan region and to ensure its smooth integration into the Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures.

I would like to underline that economic progress is essential for the creation of a tolerant, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. To date, the EU has provided more than €2.6 billion to Kosovo to address urgent post-conflict needs, develop and strengthen Kosovo's new institutions, support the returns process and foster economic development. Furthermore, the EU financed UNMIK Pillar IV, which has been assisting in the revitalization of economic activity in Kosovo and in

the creation of a modern, open-market economy attractive for foreign investments. The EU is also committed to assisting Kosovo's economy in the future. The aim is to create sustainable conditions for economic growth and development, as well as to bring Kosovo's legislative and administrative frameworks closer to European standards. The rule of law and security conditions are crucial for the prospects of the economic growth and development of Kosovo.

Finally, UNMIK's work is coming to a closing phase. The smooth transition can continue only if the necessary funding in crucial areas is available. The EU is the largest donor to Kosovo, and we encourage others to consider as a priority how they can deepen their assistance to Kosovo. An international donor conference is foreseen after the status settlement. A long-term commitment from the international donor community will be needed to ensure a lasting and durable status settlement in Kosovo.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): At the outset, let me join my colleagues in welcoming you, Sir, as President of the Security Council. I also welcome Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and Mr. Agim Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his profound report (S/2006/707) on the situation in Kosovo and to express our appreciation to Mr. Joachim Rücker, the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his detailed briefing. My country would like to assure the Special Representative of its full support and to wish him every success in his important international mission at this very sensitive time.

I would like to flag several points that, in my delegation's view, are of crucial importance in the context of today's debate. When we read through the current report of the Secretary-General, we can see some signs of positive developments in Kosovo; at the same time we get a clear picture of the many problems that remain to be addressed there. We welcome the progress made in reforming and strengthening the capacities of the province's Institutions of Self-Government and in solving community-related issues, although there is an urgent need for more concrete and decisive steps in the overall implementation of standards.

As essential preconditions for a successful settlement of Kosovo's future status, the issues of returns, broader engagement by Kosovo Serbs in political and institutional life at the municipal and central levels and the protection of minority rights and of Orthodox religious and cultural sites continue to be high on the agenda, much to our regret. Given the ongoing political process, we also find it particularly disturbing that security incidents, affecting primarily the Serb population of the province, continue to take place. To prevent a possible worsening of the situation, those responsible must be brought to justice immediately.

Agreeing on the need to give new impetus to the ongoing political process, and supporting efforts to achieve a viable and lasting settlement of the situation in Kosovo, Ukraine consistently advocates stabilizing the political, economic and security situation in Kosovo on the basis of the fundamental relevant Security Council decisions, including resolution 1244 (1999), as well as fully observing the principles of international law.

We welcome the direct negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina on defining the political status of Kosovo, conducted under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahtisaari, although the results achieved so far are not as convincing as we expected at the beginning of the entire process. Nevertheless, we appreciate the progress made on technical issues, which could constitute a good basis for major compromises on other important issues.

In our view, the establishment of effective dialogue among all Kosovo communities and engaging all stakeholders are the only way out, leading to a mutually acceptable and comprehensive compromise settlement. It is obvious that any decision on the future status of Kosovo should guarantee the further implementation of the democratic standards and full respect for human rights and the rights of all ethnic Kosovo groups. In our view, it should first and foremost promote long-term regional security.

Ukraine believes that, given the fragile situation in Kosovo itself and in the wider area, the political process of determining the future status of Kosovo should be handled with the maximum level of

responsibility by all the parties involved. Any imposed decision or hasty actions leading to the unilateral change of the borders of an internationally recognized democratic State in the Balkan region will destabilize the situation and set a dangerous precedent in Europe and the entire world. We are especially concerned that the Kosovo model could be taken as a scenario by separatist movements in the post-Soviet era.

To our great disappointment, we are witnessing the unfolding of such an undesirable scenario, with attempts by some self-proclaimed regimes in the post-Soviet space to use the settlement of the situation in Kosovo as a precedent to claim independence. Despite the concerted efforts of the international community to resolve frozen conflicts, with full respect for the territorial integrity of the countries concerned, announcements of independence referendums in the Transdniestria region of the Republic of Moldova and in South Ossetia, Georgia, in our view pose a major threat and challenge to the stability and continuity of the process of the settlement of those conflicts.

In this context, it is particularly important to ensure that the eventual decision of the Security Council on the final status of Kosovo does not impose a solution, but is taken only with the clearly expressed consent of both parties concerned.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Neritani (Albania): Let me begin by welcoming the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker. During this challenging phase of transition — a crucial moment for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) — his proven commitment and abilities are a good guarantor and indicator that the successful and resolute work of his predecessor will continue. The Albanian Government will continue to support his efforts in pursuing the goal of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen. Our appreciation also goes to UNMIK, KFOR, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union (EU) for their continuing dedication and commitment to Kosovo. We welcome the EU's invaluable efforts and recent activities on the ground, which will assist in a coherent transition.

I would also like to recognize the presence of Prime Minister Çeku here today and to warmly welcome him to this meeting. We congratulate him for his continuing leadership and the achievements that have been noted during the period covered by the report. We are convinced that, under Mr. Çeku's leadership, the Government will continue to provide effective governance to build a viable, multi-ethnic and prosperous Kosovo for all its citizens.

I would also like to welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, representative of the Serbian delegation.

I thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report (S/2006/707) and express my delegation's appreciation for that realistic and substantive document. We share his overall assessment that further progress with significant achievements continues to be the current trend in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General underlined in paragraph 12 of the report,

> "The ongoing political process has had a noteworthy effect on the commitment of the Kosovo authorities to standards implementation, and its results. The Provisional Institutions have also shown a greater willingness to take responsibility for both minority concerns and for improved governance".

It must be emphasized that the security situation has remained stable and has not been adversely affected by the ongoing future status process. We note with satisfaction that progress on standards implementation has continued during the reporting period and that to date, as a result of the Government's priorities and commitment, a good number of priority standards have been reported as completed, while the remaining ones are on the right track for completion within the specified time frame.

The recent adoption of the European Partnership Action Plan by the Kosovo Government marks a new phase. It incorporates the standards as requirements for Kosovo's long-term European perspective. It reflects the Government's clear vision of this perspective for Kosovo and its commitment to ensuring that effective standards implementation remains a high-priority goal and an important responsibility during and beyond the final status. We join in the Secretary-General's call, and we are convinced that Prime Minister Çeku's Government will sustain the positive momentum that it has created. Standards implementation, especially the

remaining Contact Group priorities, is crucial in order to ensure both a multi-ethnic Kosovo and a better future for all of its citizens.

It is commonly understood and widely accepted that the main goal remains the building of a multi-ethnic Kosovo. It is equally essential that Kosovo Serbs participate fully in the institutions and in public life as the best — indeed, the only viable — way of expressing and promoting their legitimate concerns.

The Belgrade authorities should respond to the coherent policies of the international community by removing all impediments to Kosovo Serb participation in the Kosovo institutions. As paragraph 31 of the report correctly underlined, "Lack of participation is a disservice to the Kosovo Serb population" and, as stated in paragraph 9, "remains an obstacle to the fulfilment of certain standards".

At the same time, we appeal to the Kosovo Albanians to redouble their efforts in respect of freedom and the rights of minorities and to increase their outreach to all communities. We hold the view that both Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo should leave the past behind, engage in reconciliation, strengthen their cooperation and look forward towards their common future.

The Albanian Government continues to support dialogue between the representatives of Albanians and Serbs, and calls upon both sides to take a realistic approach. We are pleased with the ongoing bilateral talks in Vienna on issues relating to future status and other critical issues, including decentralization, the rights of minorities and religious and cultural heritage. We encourage both sides to continue this dialogue and to engage seriously and constructively with Mr. Ahtisaari and his team.

The political process to determine Kosovo's final status is continuing, and is now approaching its final stage. At this very critical juncture, international community coherence on this matter is very significant and indispensable. Albania will continue to play an active role and to take a constructive approach. We continue to hold the view that the status process should proceed steadily and swiftly, with a decisive solution by the end of 2006. As the guiding principles clearly state, once it has started, the process cannot be blocked. Further delay would prolong the instability and uncertainty and would not serve Kosovo, Serbia, or the surrounding region.

We continue to share in the international support for Mr. Ahtisaari and his team. We reiterate our strong support for the Contact Group guiding principles that there should be no changes of borders, no partition of Kosovo and no union with any other country or part of any other country. We support a realistic solution, fully grounded in today's reality of this sui generis case — a stable and multi-ethnic solution, one which will respect the overwhelming and clear will of the people of Kosovo and be acceptable to them. Such an outcome should contribute to strengthening the stability and security of Kosovo and the region as a whole, and be in tune with the spirit and the trends of regional cooperation.

We stress our strong conviction that the most realistic, pragmatic and just solution of the status issue would be independence, with the civil and security presence of the international community continuing for a certain period of time. By that, we mean an independence that ensures the promotion and protection of the rights and cultural and religious heritage of Serbs and all other minorities; an independence that brings about a society in which all people in Kosovo can live in dignity and prosperity and without fear. We are encouraged that the Kosovo leadership, civil society, the media, the relevant institutions and the broader community are demonstrating political and social cohesion, growing unity and cooperation with the international community with a view to building such a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, integrated into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

We are confident that independence will generate and guarantee social and economic stability and security for Kosovo and the whole region, help establish a sustainable, multi-ethnic and democratic society there and pave the way for fulfilment of Kosovo's European perspective. Albania shares the broader view that an international military and civilian presence in Kosovo, even after the determination of status, is going to be essential for the success of all those endeavours.

In conclusion, let me reassure the Council that the Albanian Government will continue to offer its constructive approach by actively playing a helpful, moderating role in the region and specifically on this particular matter. The international community and the negotiating team of Mr. Ahtisaari will continue to have

a reliable partner in Albania throughout the upcoming process and beyond.

The President: The President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Raskovic-Ivic.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): First of all, I would like to thank everybody for their statements and to say to Mr. Rücker that the Coordinating Centre for Kosovo and Metohija is ready to cooperate with the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to refer to the statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) that was made by Her Excellency Ms. Kirsti Lintonen. Serbia enthusiastically welcomes the EU's objectives regarding Kosovo and Metohija, as well as its contributions to a possible future international civilian presence. We are, of course, committed to cooperation with a new EU mission when the time comes, including during the preparatory phase.

Let me say that there are many things upon which we can cooperate, first of all the issue of return. Although the European Union statement said that there has been progress on returns, I would like to disagree at this time and say that there is a lot of work still to be done on that issue.

One other thing that has been mentioned here is the issue of progress in the rule of law. From the Serbian point of view, there is a perception that there is a culture of impunity in Kosovo. That is based on realistic data. For example, from 1999 until today, 931 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been killed. For those misdeeds, no one has been indicted or taken to court. However, we believe that things are changing for the better and that we will cooperate on many things, such as regional security and returns.

I would like to say a few words on the reasons for the non-participation of the Serbian community in local government and in the Provisional Institutions. In 2002, local elections were held, and five municipalities have representatives at the local level. In 2004, there were elections for the Kosovo parliament. Serbs boycotted those elections; only 811 people went to the polling station and voted. Thus, we have now Serbian representatives backed by only 0.3 per cent of the electoral body. This electoral body consists of 140,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians in the region of Kosovo and Metohija and 230,000 people who are outside the administrative border and are internally displaced in Serbia. What we would like to have as Serbs — not as Belgrade, but as Serbs — are legal and legitimate representatives. I think that the Council will agree with me that the endorsement of 0.3 per cent of the electoral body is not legitimate and legal Serbian representation. We think — Serbs think — that this is not the end of the story.

The key to many issues concerning Serbs in the region is decentralization. If decentralization were in place — I do not say implemented, but agreed upon — then we could have elections. Elections could be organized very quickly after that. A bottom-up process would then occur: first, representatives in the local communities, then in the future, decentralized municipalities, and then representatives in the Kosovo parliament.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Rücker to respond to comments that have been made.

Mr. Rücker: I would like to thank everyone around the table for the encouraging words of welcome and the expressions of support for my mission. I am also grateful for the interventions highlighting so many subjects that are important for our mission. I would like to briefly comment on just a few of these: Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic just mentioned the non-participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Institutions; freedom of movement, which was highlighted by several speakers; returns; and finally, crime, which was a recurrent theme.

Regarding the non-participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the past elections, we have the impression in Kosovo that this was induced, or at least not stopped by Belgrade. I think the Serbian Government should avoid even the perception that it is creating the very conditions that it deplores in terms of the political integration and economic participation of the Kosovo Serbs, which was a recurrent theme as something desirable.

With regard to freedom of movement, which was mentioned by several speakers, I think we have seen steady improvement both in reality and in perception. The most recent Kosovo Police Service freedom of movement assessment reports that 93 per cent of the people in Kosovo — including, of course, all

communities — travel outside their village, and that 94 per cent of these feel safe in doing so. Perceptions of security and the freedom to move, particularly of the Kosovo Serb community south of Mitrovica and the Kosovo Albanian community north of Mitrovica, continue to be undermined by acts of intimidation and by rumours. That, of course, is due to frequent reporting of statements by senior Serbian officials that Kosovo Serbs are not safe and do not have freedom of movement. This exacerbates those perceptions and has a significant damaging psychological impact. Again, I think even the perception should be avoided that something is created, only to be deplored in the next phase.

With regard to returns, I am very grateful for the encouragement referring to what we have recently concluded with Belgrade. Yes, there was the signing of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns between the Provisional Institutions, the Government of Serbia and UNMIK on 6 June 2006. It further reaffirmed the commitment of Pristina and Belgrade to intensify the return process, which is crucial. And most important, it has lead to 70 families that have agreed to return to Srpski Babuš by signing the respective agreements. We have to do much more in that respect. I fully agree with all that was said.

The reasons for the low number of returns are, of course, multiple. They include the lack of jobs, the economy and lack of clarity on status, which all play a role. But we are fully committed to that.

Let me now turn to the issue of crime. We absolutely reject accusations by Belgrade that we are turning a blind eye to ethnically motivated crime in Kosovo. In fact, we specifically direct the police to monitor and prioritize any crime that is potentially ethnically motivated. We use the term "PME" — potentially ethnically motivated crime — and that is very closely monitored. Just to set the record straight, potentially ethnically motivated crimes in Kosovo are significantly on the decline. There is also a trend towards the same absolute numbers of affected Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs.

While some crime in Kosovo is ethnically motivated, the great majority is not, and it is irresponsible to politicize every security incident by characterizing it as ethnically motivated before the facts have even been investigated. There are lots of examples which I will spare you, but which I could give you in that respect.

With regard to the recent bombing incident in Mitrovica, we are actively pursuing that. One arrest has been made and investigations are ongoing. Also, with regard to the follow-up of 4 March 2004, which was mentioned by several delegations, 243 persons have been successfully prosecuted and convicted of crimes and minor offences in connection with the March 2004 riots. In addition, on 25 August 2006, the international pre-trial judge ordered the detention of four defendants suspected of being involved in the burning down of numerous buildings in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje during the riots. It is expected that more arrests will follow as the investigation continues. Those recent arrests mark significant progress in the follow-up, which is not reflected in the report that is in front of Council members.

As regards individual cases that have been mentioned, it is very frustrating to see that allegations made in official communications from Belgrade, after we have duly responded and clarified the facts, are then used again in their original form in public statements. We have again seen evidence today of that phenomenon on the floor of the Council. I do not intend to engage in a numbers game or to go into individual cases with the Serbian representative.

Our factual position on the security situation for the reporting period is amply reflected in the technical assessment annexed to the report of the Secretary-General. That technical assessment is the product of a well-structured mechanism of regular collection, collation and evaluation of facts that involves multiple agencies at various levels, including, in addition to UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions, the Contact Group representatives in Pristina, who have been very intensively engaged in the vetting of standards implementation reports. This is, in other words, as credible as it can get.

Let me thank the Council again for giving us the opportunity to present this report today.

The President: I thank Mr. Rücker for the clarifications he just provided.

There are no more speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.